MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MEETING
CITY OF KENNESAW
Council Chambers
(2529 J.O. Stephenson Avenue, Kennesaw, GA 30144)

Livestream: https://www.facebook.com/CityofKennesaw/
July 29, 2024
6:30 PM

Present	Mayor Derek Easterling Mayor Pro Tem Antonio Jones Councilmember Madelyn Orochena Councilmember Tracey Viars Councilmember Pat Ferris Councilmember Anthony Gutierrez City Clerk Lea Alvarez City Manager Jeff Drobney City Attorney Randall Bentley, Sr.

1. **Invocation**
2. **Pledge of Allegiance**
3. **Call to Order**
4. **Announcements**

   A. If you are not able to attend a meeting in-person and would like to provide public comment on a specific agenda item, you can email kennesawcouncil@kennesaw-ga.gov no later than 6:00 PM the night of the regular meeting. Your comments on a specific agenda item will be read aloud or grouped into categories for the record. **Facebook Live is not monitored for public comment.**

5. **Presentations**
6. **Public Comment/Business from the Floor**
7. **Old Business**
8. **New Business**
9. **Committee and Board Reports**
10. **Public Hearing(s)**

A. **Third and Final Public Hearing: Maintenance and Operation (M&O) Millage Rate**
Consideration for approval of a Resolution to adopt the proposed Maintenance and Operation (M&O) Millage Rate

Assistant Finance Director Jennifer Gordy shared that the third and final public hearing for the adoption of the proposed Maintenance and Operation (M&O) millage rate will be held on Monday, August 5, 2024, at 6:30 p.m.

Mayor Easterling noted that the agenda item states a third and final hearing, but the second public hearing will be held earlier that morning at 10:30 a.m.

B. **Third and Final Public Hearing: Bond Millage Rate**
Consideration for approval of a Resolution to adopt the proposed Bond Millage Rate

Ms. Gordy shared that the third and final public hearing for the adoption of the proposed Bond millage rate will be held on Monday, August 5, 2024, at 6:30 p.m.

11. Consent Agenda

A. **Minutes: July 8, 2024 Work Session**
Approval of the July 8, 2024, City Council work session minutes

B. **Minutes: July 8, 2024 Special Called City Council FY 25 Budget Work Session**
Approval of the July 8, 2024, special called FY 25 budget work session.

C. **Minutes: July 15, 2024 Regular Meeting**
Approval of the July 15, 2024, City Council regular meeting minutes.

D. **Minutes: July 15, 2024 Executive Session**
Approval of the July 15, 2024, City Council executive session minutes.

12. General and Administrative

A. **Resolution: New Bank Account for the National Opioid Settlement Funds**
Consideration for approval of a Resolution authorizing the opening of a new bank account for the National Opioid Settlement funds.

Assistant Finance Director Jennifer Gordy presented a resolution authorizing the opening of a new bank account for the National Opioid Settlement funds. Ms. Gordy said that because of the restrictions on the use of the funds, the Finance Department would like to keep the funds separate.

Councilmember Ferris asked if there was an estimate on how much money the City would receive. Ms. Gordy responded that so far, we have received $36,000, but the settlement will continue for the next 18 years, so she is not sure how much the City will receive in the future. She mentioned that they have already received notification from Kroger that the City would receive money from them.

After receiving confirmation from the Council, Mayor Easterling suggested moving the item to the Consent Agenda for the regular meeting.

B. **Bail Bond License: Empire Surety Group**
Consideration for approval of a Bail Bond license for Empire Surety Group, Inc. d/b/a A 24 Hour Bail Bonding located at 2248 Austell Road SW Marietta, GA 30008. Applicant: Robert Corley.

Business License Manager LaMaya Edmonds presented a bail bond license application for Empire Surety Group, Inc. dba A 24-Hour Bail Bonding located at 2248 Austell Road SW, Marietta GA 30008. The applicant has submitted a completed application including character affidavits, escrow agreement, executed Power of Attorneys for each employee, Cobb County Sheriff's Office approval, and an affidavit of applicant's property. The escrow deposit will be paid upon approval. Fingerprints and background checks are on file.

After receiving confirmation from the Council, Mayor Easterling suggested moving the item to the Consent Agenda for the regular meeting.

13. Public Safety

A. **Crime Statistics: June 2024**

Chief Bill Westenberger presented the June 2024 crime statistics [see **Exhibit A**].

14. Information Technology

15. Public Works and Building Maintenance

A. **DISCUSSION:** Update on City Hall Front Improvements

Public Works Director Ricky Stewart provided an update on the revitalization of the front of City Hall. The concept includes transforming the small parking lot beside the Kennesaw Police Department into three handicap parking spots. Doing so would require removing the oak trees between the parking lot and Little General Cloggers Lane. The current parking lot has a lot of root intrusion, which is not compatible with any ADA use. On the left central part of the concept [see **Exhibit B**], staff would remove the concrete sidewalk that connects the parking lot to the employee entrance area to eliminate the steps. Any access from the large parking lot would come from the newer sidewalk that is in front of City Hall. The intent would be to remove the bricks and pour concrete to allow for easier wheelchair use. The concrete striping will also be removed from J.O. Stephenson Avenue. Any cross-traffic for pedestrians would be at Dallas Street or Little General Cloggers to eliminate any mid-block crossings on J.O. Stephenson Avenue. The final portions of the plan include removing the trees along the front of City Hall as well as landscaping.

The estimated cost of this project is between $300,000 to $350,000.

Councilmember Ferris asked if there were any front elevation renderings from the

viewpoint of J.O. Stephenson. Mr. Stewart said they did not have any renderings yet, but there was a video created seven or eight years ago that was still available to view that is similar to what he is proposing. Mr. Ferris asked Mr. Stewart to come back to Council when he has front elevation renderings.

16. Recreation and Culture

17. Community Development

18. Public Comment/Business from the Floor

19. City Manager's Report

A. Reports, Discussions, and Updates

B. **UPDATE:** Caboose Restoration Project

Assistant to the City Manager James Friedrich provided an update on the Caboose Restoration project. The Caboose has been sitting outside the front of the Southern Museum since 1993 and not much has been done with it. Mr. Friedrich and Museum staff have been working to get it restored with the goal of turning it into a functioning exhibit.

There are four phases to the project. The foundation was examined and was determined to be solid. The exterior received maintenance, including being tested for asbestos, replacing the windows, and exterior paint. The interior received maintenance including paint, electrical work, a new HVAC unit installed, and eventually, the furniture will be reupholstered. The final phase will include landscape. Mr. Friedrich stated the goal is to have the exhibit open to the public at "Trains, Trains, Trains" in January.

C. **DISCUSSION ONLY:** Paid Parental Leave

City Manager Jeff Drobney stated that staff has been working hard to create personnel policies that make Kennesaw a destination for employees. A lot of improvements have been made over the last few years, but Dr. Drobney suggested that paid parental leave is an area that the City still needs to address. Looking at surrounding cities and counties, the City of Kennesaw is one of the few that does not have a policy in place that provides parental leave to both the mother and the father for birth or adoption. Dr. Drobney recommends the Council adopt a change to our personnel policy where an employee may receive up to six consecutive weeks of paid parental leave during a 12-month period. The new policy is similar to what the State of Georgia and Cobb County have in place. To be eligible, employees must be employed full-time for at least one full year of service having worked at least 1,250 hours proceeding that 12-month period. If the Council agrees, Dr. Drobney would like to put a resolution on the agenda for the next meeting to adopt paid parental leave and change the personnel policy.

Mayor Pro Tem Jones appreciated Dr. Drobney for moving forward with this policy. He asked if there could be a look back period for employees who went out on leave prior to this policy being adopted. Dr. Drobney stated there would not be a way to do that.

Councilmember Ferris does not see how a look back period could be accomplished. He asked Dr. Drobney for an estimate of what it would cost and how it affected vacation time accrued. Dr. Drobney stated it would not impact vacation or sick time accrued. Employees will continue to accrue while they are on leave. The cost would depend on the number of children born or adopted in a year and what those employees are paid. He believes the benefit the City would receive is well worth the expense.

Councilmember Gutierrez confirmed that this policy would cover full pay and not a percentage. Dr. Drobney stated this policy is six-weeks of full pay.

Mayor Easterling asked for the resolution be added to Monday's regular meeting agenda.

20. Mayor's Report

A. Mayor and Council (re)appointments to Boards and Commissions. This item is for (re)appointments made by the Mayor to any Board, Committee, Authority, or Commission requiring an appointment to fill any vacancies, resignations, and to create or dissolve boards and commissions, as deemed necessary.

21. Council Reports & Discussions

A. **DISCUSSION: Public Comment at Work Sessions**
Discussion item requested by Councilmember Madelyn Orochena for consideration to add a public comment section to work sessions.

Councilmember Orochena shared she would like for the Council to consider adding a public comment section at the end of the work session agenda. With discussions happening at the work session, Councilmember Orochena said it makes sense for the people who attend to be able to voice their concerns. She would like to extend the opportunity to comment beyond going home to write an email.

Councilmember Gutierrez supported the idea of giving the residents as many opportunities as possible to speak to their representatives.

Councilmember Ferris disagrees. He is in favor of public comment, but a work session is for setting the agenda for the regular meeting. If public comment is added to the end of the meeting, the agenda has already been set. He shared that there are several opportunities to provide comments at the regular meeting where the final decisions are made. Councilmember Ferris shared that it is rare for him to get feedback from work sessions and doesn't see it being a great benefit.

Mayor Pro Tem Jones is not opposed to it and sees it as a benefit.

Councilmember Viars stated she was middle of the road on this topic, but could see the value in having an extra week to think about comments prior to a vote. She does not think there will be a lot of input either way.

Councilmember Orochena said that receiving public comment on items a week prior would be more beneficial than to hear them a few minutes before the vote.

Mayor Easterling said that after a work session, the Council spends the week considering the information that was presented and that that would be the opportunity for people to reach out if needed. He does not understand the need to speak at the work session.

Councilmember Gutierrez said writing an email or making a phone call does not have as much of an impact as the opportunity to stand up in front of the representative and have a record of the comment. Mayor Easterling shared that there are at least two opportunities to speak in front of the elected at a regular meeting. Councilmember Gutierrez did not see a con in having a third opportunity to speak. If it is underutilized, then it is underutilized.

Mayor Easterling requested this item be placed on the agenda for the regular meeting.

22. Executive Session

Pursuant to the provisions of O.C.G.A 50-14-3, the City Council could, at any time during the meeting, vote to close the public meeting and move to executive session to discuss matters relating to litigation, legal actions and/or communications from the City Attorney; and/or personnel matters; and/or real estate matters.

Motion by Councilmember Gutierrez to enter into Executive Session as allowed by O.C.G.A § 50-14-3 for the purpose of discussing legal and land. Motion seconded by Councilmember Viars.

Vote taken, motion unanimously approved 5-0. Motion passed.

7:04 p.m. Recess to Executive Session

The Mayor, City Council, City Manager, City Clerk, Economic Development Director, and Assistant City Attorney attended the Executive Session.

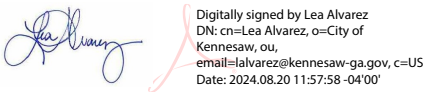
7:31 p.m. Reconvene to Open Session

Councilmember Gutierrez read the Council back into Open Session and directed the Mayor and City Council to execute an affidavit in compliance with O.C.G.A § 50-14-4. Motion seconded by Councilmember Viars.

Vote taken, motion unanimously approved 5-0. Motion passed.

23. Adjourn

Mayor Easterling adjourned the meeting at 7:33 p.m. The next regular meeting will be held on Monday, August 5, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers. The public is encouraged to attend or view via Facebook Live.



Lea Alvarez, City Clerk